

Operation Time Lord

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Category: Harry Potter

Genre: Humor, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Draco M., Hermione G.

Pairings: Draco M./Hermione G.

Status: Completed

Published: 2016-04-10 22:26:55

Updated: 2016-04-10 22:26:55

Packaged: 2016-04-27 20:18:59

Rating: M

Chapters: 1

Words: 4,770

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Draco Malfoy and Hermione Granger are sent back in time to retrieve a precious artefact from a long since lost place. Things don't go as planned. Obviously. ONE-SHOT

Operation Time Lord

They fell. They fell, and fell, and fell some more, fell until there was nowhere else to fall towards.

They fell through time, fell through space, fell through the intricacies of physical equations and mechanical concepts, fell through common sense and social norms, and fell through progress and regression, and when they hit the ground, they hit it hard.

The world they knew shattered behind them.

Draco was pretty sure a good part of his ribcage had followed suit.

"It should be night," was the first thing he heard and he turned his head to follow Granger's voice to be met by an almost affronted expression. "It should be night," she repeated, chapped bottom lip thrust forward in a moue of discontent. "Why is there light?"

"Because that's what happens when there isn't dark?" Draco groaned and tried to sit up, gingerly lifting his upper body off the ground. A sharp pain in both sides informed him it was a very bad idea and he let himself fall back with a sigh. The thick dust on the road plastered to his sweaty arms, sending a shiver of revulsion up his spine.

"Granger," he then said, teeth clenched hard enough to keep the misery from spilling out of his body and still attempting a tone

studiously bored, "if you're quite finished with questioning the universe, I think there's some internal bleeding that you might need to check on. No pressure and all but sooner than I'm dead would be best, probably."

Her petulant expression not entirely vanishing, she scrambled to his side and gingerly felt his torso through the thin fabric of his shirt. Immediately, her features morphed into a mask of veiled concern that she tried and failed to hide beneath a frown. "I don't know about bleeding," she grimaced, "but I think at least one, no, two, at least two of your ribs are broken." A suspectly high sound that Draco tried to mask as another groan escaped past his lips as she pressed on a particularly sensitive spot and it had Hermione snatching her head back as if burned. A pretty sullen "Make that three" was spat out and she brought back her cold palm just to immediately find another agonizingly painful patch of skin.

"You," Draco rasped as he tried against good sense to move out of her reach, "are atrocious at this and should never be a healer."

"Keep being this charming," she huffed, all the while motioning for him to keep still. "It makes me stumble all over myself in my rush to help you."

"Oh, please. We've been partners for years." He sounded unconcerned enough, if pained. "You're not just going to let me die like this."

He watched her as she attempted to thrust half her arm into the blasted beady purse that never left her side, searching for the potions that she had no doubt thrown in there before leaving, and swallowed hard. The search didn't seem to go well. "Well, you're not going to let me die like this on purpose, I suppose."

"They moved," she snapped at him as if the audacity some glass vials had not to stand in perfectly determined order while falling through hundreds of years of ups and downs and laterals was truly unbelievable. "And I can't find where they went. Instead, I keep findingâ€¦ Oh my God!" She retracted her arm, her hand clenched around not a little bottle but a bunch of what looked like weeks' worth of broken quills and lollipop sticks. "Why do I even keep these things?"

"Promise me," Draco said as she ineptly threw them to the ground with what was possibly the least coordinated move he'd ever seen. "Promise you'll never ever be a healer." He watched her bring out a canister of "â€" was that bleacher? â€" and some scraps of a terrible checkered fabric and felt more words were needed to enunciate his horror. "Ever," was all that got past his lips before her sharp look quieted him down like a Silencing Charm.

Alas, hurt as it did, he supposed he probably wasn't internally bleeding. Good thing, since Granger didn't look like she'd find those potions before their real time caught up with them or before he finally keeled over due to uncontrollable hemorrhage.

It was just as well since a return to their period meant Draco was going to beat Ronald Weasley (though it was not entirely his fault) till he swore to never ever try the thinking business again. Food and fighting, he'd say between hexes. All of us stick with what we

know and Weasley, you are not cut out for having __**any**__ ideas._

And from the first time he had heard it, Draco had hated _the idea_, with a dislike he had naturally expressed by being elegantly and calmly vocal about it. "I think it situates somewhere between batshit crazy and downright insane on the how-to-make-sure-life-will-fuck-you scale and I want fucking nothing to do with it," he had said while resting back in his seat, arms crossed and scowl in place, already knowing it was a terribly lost battle. Predictably, the rest of the Order seemed to agree it was some second coming of Merlin rolled into a wordy suicide plan and that excited them to no end while the fact that it was a teeny, tiny, minuscule bit desperate (_and weak)_ apparently escaped their sharp minds and valiant souls. Pity.

Draco, with his superior intelligence and capacity of analyzes, naturally knew better.

So he absolutely refused to think too much _why_ he had agreed to help them even so. **That **was a dark place to be and Draco wasn't that into dark places these days.

"Do you really believe going back 600 years to get a bloody book it's a good idea?" he had aloofly and not at all high-handedly â€" though he might be biased, of course â€" demanded. "I mean, I know it's a _book_ â€" the air, water and nourishment of your people, but Granger, it's doomed to fail."

Hermione had stopped from packing her bag, turned onto him eyes that held defeat caged all the way back behind dark irises, and sighed. "No, Malfoy. I don't think it could work. I think it's a long shot. I think it's disastrous. I think that, if this manuscript contains a method for simultaneously destroying the Horcruxes and the maker, there are a probably a hell of a lot more stuff in there that shouldn't see the light of day. I think it was a dark book and it's been destroyed for a reason. I think we are taking a huge risk just by considering unleashing that into the world."

She closed her beaded bag and set down on the bed, hands dangling between her legs, face studiously fixed on the hard floor.

"I don't even know if going that far back is possible," she admitted, voice low. "But I'm willing to try. Are you really not going to take this chance?" She lifted her head towards him, eyes empty of any of the steely light he had come to associate with her. "I want it to be over, Draco. So much has already failed. So many have already died. I _need_ it to be over. Don't you?"

He had felt his heart squeeze painfully. A tight knot had clogged his throat. A heaviness had settled over him and he had thought he might have been crazy for even considering it.

"Fine, Granger," he'd heard himself say. "Let's do it, then." _Nothing left to lose, anyway._

That's how he had ended up on his back in the 14th century, on a gravel road, in the middle of the _Forbidden Forest_, with Granger, who wasn't getting any Nurse of the Year awards anytime soon, muttering about the impracticability of Undetectable Enlargement Charms and the impossibility of casting any other spells over objects

altered by it. Good to see her priorities were, just as usual, on the straight and narrow side. Ha.

"I think I messed up my numbers," he admitted, partly to stop the lecture on the difficulty of balancing the degree of undetectability with the perfect measurements and partly because he knew she'd otherwise beat herself up over it later. "That might have affected the runic pattern."

Hermione, finally with a deep purple vial in one hand and her wand in the other, looked at him in confusion. "What?" "The light thing. That's why," he groaned when she tried to help him sit upright, "that's why it's not dark. I messed it up. And I'm sorry. On the bright side, I can promise you it won't happen again. Since we're never doing this again. Since it's stupid. Which figures. Since Weasley thought it up."

He downed the potion and laid back down, letting her wave her wand over him muttering a few healing spells anyway. Draco winced as he felt one of his ribs try to reposition itself and curled his fists tightly. As the potion spread to his veins, words flew out of him again, an inescapable string of ramblings most likely propelled by the calming quality of the medicine.

"Are you sure this is the right way to do that spell?" Another one of his bones mended and he jerked, a heavy groan escaping past his tightly clenched teeth. "Because I think you might be doing something wrong. And there's a chance you might be wrong, anyway. Even if you're sure, I mean. I hear you aren't supposed to feel a thing when done correctly. But I feel things. I feel a lot of things."

He also felt some things he wasn't necessarily keen on sharing with her since they truly had nothing to do with his injury but connected quite obviously with the way the droopy light shone just right on Granger's manically electrical mane of curls. .

"I hear you aren't supposed to let go of a magically timed portal either but that obviously also didn't work out for you, Malfoy. I also hear you shouldn't badmouth the friends of your healer if you want good quality care."

She tsked disapprovingly as he spasmed again. "And you heard wrong, anyway. How surprising."

He felt the right corner of his mouth itch, yearning to go up in what wanted to be an idiotically huge smile. Instead, another groan of eviscerating pain made its way into the world. Figures.

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Granger was, normally, level-headed. Apparently, though, excursions through the great cavern of time sent her, for lack of a better expression, into a complete, caricatural almost, tizzy. After everything calmed down and charmed shields were finally placed around them, the woman worked herself up into a riot.

And then she worked herself up some more.

"So what are we going to do now? Are we even at the right time? How can we be sure we're at the right time? What if you screwed up? What

if _I _screwed up? What if we're way before? Oh Merlin, what if we're _too _way before? What if we're in the God forsaken prehistoric?" She stomped her foot. Actually stomped her foot. "Malfoy," she ordered crossly. "_Say something._"

From his spot under a nearby tree, Draco, not so secretly delighted with not being the only rambling fool, snorted and opted for the sarcastic choice. Naturally.

"Calm down, grandmother. Merlin. You're like a one-woman show, Granger, someone ever told you that?"

It was, apparently, the wrong thing to say. With his back against the tree and his head raised to the sun, eyelids shut, he missed the dangerous look entering her eyes but felt her _childish_ revenge as a mild stinging hex made both of his arms itch. "Hey!" he protested, frantically rubbing his skin, "I'm a convalescent over here!"

Hermione squinted in his direction, apparently unimpressed. Draco knew the look. It was the I-have-no-compassion-for-you-and-you're-about-to-realize-that expression and if three years of continued partnership with the woman had taught him something, it was she could be a mean one.

"Oh, dear," she mocked, "poor baby Malfoy, for the first time hurt! However shall he bear it? It's been two hours already and, if your sarcasm is fine, you, mister, must not be so down anymore. How about being useful for a change, hmm?"

"That's such faulty logic, Granger. Shame on you. It's like you don't even care!" he whined. "I think my feelings are hurt. Did you hear that Granger? My _feelings_ are hurt. First my ribs, now my feeling, all the essentials, really. Everything is hurt."

"I thought Malfoys don't have feelings." "Well, I do! And they are hurt. H-U-R-T. Hurt."

"As impressed as I am that you can spell, I'll make something else hurt if you don't shut up."

Draco didn't look entirely convinced but a casually pointed wand later, he crossed his legs sullenly and, again, quieted down. He didn't want to dwell too hard on the sweet like sugar satisfaction he was feeling.

He must be, truly, a twisted individual inside.

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"Did you honestly have to mumble for another two hours before deciding we should just go on with the original plan? I mean, I know it was a stupid plan to begin with but since we're already here, was there, like, another option I was not aware of? And why do you get to decide? What about my opinion? I am part of this team, you know? Half of it, actually. Half of the suicidal mission, Granger, did you hear me? My opinion _should _count. What about my feelings? Granger," he repeated once he made sure he'd been ignored, "_what about my feelings_?"

"Your special place could still be hexed, Malfoy."

Draco, despite copious contrary evidence, was rather smart. So Draco shut it.

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A Tempus Spell easily fixed their time conundrum. Other things, however, proved not to be as easily fixable.

They crawled through the thick of the Forbidden Forest, wands on the out, always careful to keep Hogwarts' Astronomy Tower to their left, always careful to avoid the centaurs that populated most of the area back in the day. _No one must see you,_ they have been told. _You can't risk a butterfly effect. Nothing can be changed. No place should be altered. You find it, you take the book, and you get out. The place would be destroyed in less than a day after. Do you two understand?_

They had had. They had also arrived two hours earlier than planned which gave them a bit longer to search for the building. The search, however, didn't turn out to be the problem.

"Is this really _it_?"

He turned back to Hermione to find her fixing the lone clay and hay cabin with an incredulous expression on her face. "This is the Lost Archive of Hogwarts, the one that was burned down by the goblins in the Great Act of Betrayal of 1362? The unparalleled bastion of cognition? The largest archive of the time? _This is __**it**__?_"

She looked almost affronted.

Draco had to admit the picture _it_ painted was not exactly grand. Far from grand, really. Nowhere near grand, if he was being honest. Still, he couldn't help but feel a tiny bit offended anyway, since i_t_ was a tremendously regretted piece of magical heritage, a piece of wizarding history all those with half a brain ended up mourning. _It _was a legend, the incarnation of the unparalleled knowledge myth that held the secrets of inestimable power and _it _was invaluable. _It _was also before them right then and they were the first people in the last six centuries to ever lay eyes on _it._ And she was dismissing _it_ just like that.

Still. _It _was not grand. And he really wished he could think of the place other than in the prissy tone of Granger's chosen personal pronoun. Alas, Draco doubted that would ever happen again. Forever and ever from now on, _it _it was. And _it _deserved defending from the profane masquerading as a woman of knowledge, dammit, half-hearted as it might or might not be! "Well," he began. "I admit it's not exactly the Library of Alexandria butâ€|"

"It's not the Library of Alexandria?!" she sputtered. "It's not the Library of Alexandria, he says. It's the Place that Raises Pigs of Alexandria, that's what it is! Deny it! I dare you!"

"Granger," Draco spat, "a little bit of respect wouldn't physically hurt you! Don't you realize? This is magnanimous. This is unbelievable. This is the history of my people!"

"I regret to inform you, Malfoy, but the history of your people looks like an on-its-last-leg pigsty and it's not far from smelling like one."

She did have a point, the disrespecting shrew, so Draco ground his teeth and then ground them some more. His thoughts scattered, trying to find an argument more persuading. "It's been built in the 10th century," was what eventually came out and, even he had to admit, it was not the smartest thing he could have said.

"Wizards!" she responded. "In the 10th century, Granger!" "Acropolis, Colosseum, the pyramids. Before Christ! Muggles." She pointed at the tumbledown building. "Wizards. In the 10th century."

Draco had to admit defeat. Bugger.

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They couldn't get in.

_It _was a rickety and shaky, smelly and ugly and protected by such powerful magic nothing they did could make a dent in the rotten wood of the door. They tried and tried, harmless hexes and slicing spells and charms so powerful they should have altered the very substance the thing was made of. And they failed. All of them. Worse, everything â€" _everything _â€" ricocheted.

"How did the goblins take this thing down?" Hermione demanded while furiously petting a smoky section of her hair. "What did they do? Blow themselves up with it?"

Sweaty and breathless, Draco rested his palms on his knees trying to take big gulps of air while panting heavily. "Goblins didn't invent terrorism, Granger. Don't give them that much credit." He trained his tired eyes on the cabin, all unscathed and ramshackle, and sighed. "Whatever they did, you probably don't want to do it. Trust me."

She didn't apparently trust him. She looked at him inquiringly, and then inquiringly and mad, then finally just mad and he sighed again heavily. "Blood sacrifice," he muttered. "Probably. They have no qualms about it and these old buildingâ€| they're like the Dark Lord's cave." He shrugged. "Some need guts and chanting and screams. Some only a little blood. I doubt this one needs the ritual. Kind of inconvenient to do that every time."

What happened next took insane to a new level.

Objectively, Draco knew Gryffindor Granger â€" _Stupid Granger_ â€" existed. He'd seen her from time to time, like once in Vietnam when she'd run all the way to the other side of a lake on a burning bridge instead of getting on his broom. Or like when she'd escaped her ties using wandless magic just to creep behind a Death Eater and hit him with a pan. Or when she'dâ€| Now that he thought about it, he'd seen quite enough of Stupid Granger after all.

He frequently forgot about her, though. Usually, she hid behind Common Sense Granger. Bartering Granger. Level-headed Granger. _Totally Slytherin Granger_. And she hid so well, Stupid Granger always took him by surprise. Like now. She appeared when he expected

her the least and, with an arch of her wand, slashed her palm open and pressed it to the door.

Then screamed_ Yes,_ he thought as he hurried to the trashing body of the girl, _Stupid Granger strikes again. Dammit. _

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One thing was clear: a Nurse of the Year Award wouldn't be coming Draco's way anytime soon, either.

He frantically searched that bloody beaded purse, then shook it and cradled it and begged it and cursed it and finally he turned it upside down and watched its contents spill on the ground like rain and nothing â€" _nothing â€" _was useful. Nothing at all.

Hermione, her arm carefully positioned and tightly swaddled in a blanket, screamed from the patch of grass he had laid her on and then violently trembled again as another aftershock rattled her body. Draco searched even more frantically.

Nothing.

"Granger." He hurried to her side and, kneeling, forced what was left of the Pain Potion down her throat. "Hermione. Please. I know you have something that could help stashed between all that nonsense. Please." She turned scattered eyes on him, her hair matted with sweat, her face flush, obviously in no condition to help anyone, the least of all him, the least of all herself.

His heart clenched in his chest and again, he was reminded of Vietnam, of the desperation clogging his throat as he watched her dashing on the bridge, ash falling with every step she took.

He remembered after the bridge, the kiss and the promise and the future and the after. He remembered the _I need it to be over. _He remembered everything and it burned in the back of his eyes.

Another tremor shook her and, clenching his teeth, he got up. He'll get in there. He'll dig his way through the ground if need be. Then the fucking portal would activate again and he'll get her home. To medicine and help and murdering psychopaths.

It was a plan.

Doubly killing Weasley was another.

He pressed a gentle kiss to her forehead. "Hang in there, Granger. You have after-the-War promises to make good on."

He turned towards the door ready to tear it down with his bare hands just to find the place looking like a temple, its door cracked open, gently swaying in the breeze.

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They fell through time again, Granger unconscious in his arms, book packed in the bag, Archive burning behind them like a funeral pyre.

Draco couldn't bear the place. He had stepped inside seething in fury at the marble and the crystal, blind to the shelves full of inestimable pieces, deaf to the legendary silence swallowing the room. The book had flown to him at a simple Accio a fourth year could have done and had rested in his hand ominous and dark like a plague, looking ready to disintegrate. He would have set it on fire as well had it been a valid choice.

Dumbledore's was the first face that greeted him, Potter and Weasley at his side like two puppets near the master, Poppy Pomfrey dozing in a chair near the door.

He marched straight to the medi-witch and, under her startled, dizzy gaze, he made an imperious sign towards the exit. Next, with a jerk of his head to Potter, he gently deposited Hermione in his arms and pushed him after the healer with a pretty off-handed "Make sure she's fine or elseâ€¦" Predictably enough, Weasley followed them like a puppy.

"Now that Miss Granger is taken care ofâ€¦" Dumbledore begun.

"You knew." Draco turned to him aggressively. "You knew. That's why you insisted the two of us go." He took a deep breath in a futile attempt to calm down and spat "You knew. It was designed like that to ensure protection. Only the Headmaster could enter of free will. And to allow access only to those of _good Wizarding families_, the enchantmentâ€¦ You knew." He took the old man in, his sagged face, his twinkle-less eyes, his mouth curled in a calculated grimace of regret. "I don't have the book," he said. "I burnt it."

And he left.

â€¦

Granger breeched the enchantments around the Manor two days later, arm fine, hair wild, face flushed and angry. He might have put up better wards against her had he not wanted to be found.

"I didn't really burnâ€¦" he started. "You left me," she cut him off. "I can't believe you left me. Of all the idiotic, half-crazed, senile ideas!" She pressed her lips to his aggressively for just a second then pulled back in another fit of rage. "Rule number one_: You don't leave your secret girlfriend behind when going in a murderous quest against a psychopath._"

He loved her rule-abiding personality. It made him question why he was attracted to her in the first place but he loved it nonetheless. The snottiness. The prissiness. The endless possibilities of making fun. He was so relieved she was fine he almost missed his cue over there.

"I thought rule number one was: _Don't put your cold feet on mine when you slip into my bed in the middle of the night_, " he said.

Hermione whacked him upside the head with her palm, somehow making the gesture appear loving and sweet. He was, alas, going insane. "It _was_ don't tell about the relationship_, you idiot. And now we have a new one, anyway."

"We do," he agreed. "I like it." Heart beating wildly, Draco let his fingers graze the scarred flesh of her arm and swallowed hard at the rubbery feel of the tissue. "You have to promise me Stupid Granger won't come out to play again anytime soon, Hermione. I don't think my blood pressure could take it. I don't think anything in me could take."

She looked ashamed for a moment and made a move as if to wrench her hand away from him but he stubbornly held on until defeated, she gave up. "I love you, Granger. So promise me."

Caught by surprise, Hermione barely repressed a deep shudder. "Promise," she whispered. "And I'm sorry. Very sorry. I don't really know what happened there."

"I do." His eyes darkened to a mercurial gray. "It was the enchantment of the place. Two people are needed to enter but only one goes inside. The one of impure blood is only meant to take the brunt. The building itself compels him or her to." He watched her pale considerably and almost hated telling her the rest. "And Dumbledore knew. That's why he wanted us to go. He knew you'd do it even willingly."

"How are you so sure?" She shook her head so large chunks of her hair hid her face and she studiously avoided his gaze. "How did you figure it out?"

Draco laughed bitterly and gathered her close again. "Written on the wall in silver and gold, all rhyming and in Latin. Very artistic. Very chauvinistic. Very hard to miss." He felt her relax slightly in his arms and press a gentle kiss on her crown. "I'm sorry I left you. I knew Potter would take good care of you, Hermione."

She hummed and pressed her face into his chest. "Speaking of Harry, he's mmm in your yard? Ron, too? We kind of figure you didn't burn the book and would try to do something stupid on your own. So we came because we wanted in on the stupid stuff, too?"

He shook his head affectionately. "I knew you would. And it was nice of you to bring me a present. Best secret girlfriend ever. Now, if you'll excuse me," Draco straightened and made it for the door, "I need to teach Weasley some essentials. Prepare the potions, darling. It'll get ugly."

Hermione huffed, half-amused, half-contrite, and let him go. Boys.

"So," she heard Ron from the outside, "Operation Time Lord didn't go _that_ bad after all, did it?"

Then he screamed.

* * *

><p>I don't usually write Dramione, despite the fact they're my OTP. I just don't think I ever get them quite right. But this came out and is bad and full of flaws and inconsistent but I can't bear to read it one more time. So there you have it. Also, thanks to my best friend for some stuff yada yada because I know you'll read this. Tweemyx out._

End
file.